

OPINION

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Editorials represent the opinion of The News Tribune editorial board. They are written by Patrick O'Callahan and Cheryl Tucker.

OUR VIEW

Johnson in Bonney Lake, Stuard in Sumner

Many incumbents on local city councils and school boards are facing no primary opposition this year – and some are even running unopposed. Not so in the East Pierce County cities of Bonney Lake and Sumner, where every incumbent up for re-election has at least one opponent.



Johnson

However, only two races will be on the Aug. 6 primary ballot because they have at least three candidates running. The top two vote-getters will advance to the Nov. 5 general election.



Stuard

In Bonney Lake, Mayor Neil Johnson is being challenged by longtime City Councilman James Rackley, a retired accountant, and Mike Munson, who describes himself in the Pierce County Voters' Guide as self-employed in the construction industry. Munson did not respond to an invitation to be interviewed.

ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS

Rackley is a solid candidate; the editorial board has endorsed him in the past for City Council (he's in the middle of his fourth term). But he doesn't make a case for replacing Johnson as mayor. He's running because he believes Johnson convinced the council to run a ballot measure creating a separate taxing district for parks when he should have known that it lacked voter support. The ballot measure was soundly defeated.

Johnson may have badly underestimated public support, but he's right to seek a stable funding source for parks; they're badly needed in the fast-growing community. He's done a good job overall in his two terms, and the city's credit rating rose from A to AA+ during the recession. There's been little staff turnover, and he hired the city's first female police chief.

If re-elected, Johnson says this would be his last term. Voters should give it to him.

In Sumner, councilman Ed Hannus is facing three challengers as he seeks a

second full term: Earle Stuard, who has served on the Planning Commission for 3½ years; Design Commission vice-chair Melony (Kirkish) Pederson; and Jody T. Wilkins, who works in human relations for a software firm.

Nothing against Hannus, but we think Stuard presents an opportunity Sumner voters shouldn't pass up. In addition to his Planning Commission experience, he's a retired assistant finance director for the city of Bellevue who would bring professional budgeting expertise to the council. He also seeks to improve the level of discourse at council meetings, which he characterizes as sometimes "embarrassing."

Pederson – who has an architecture and urban studies background – has been active in the community, and voters seeking a candidate who would focus more on engaging the public might consider her. She's a fine candidate.

Wilkins is a bright newcomer but could use more involvement in the community before aspiring to the City Council.

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